ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

An on-access malware scanner (anti-virus, e-mail scanner) is provided which determines whether a scan to be performed has above a threshold level of complexity

5   and if so divides the scan into a plurality of different tasks. These different tasks are then delegated to further computers (50, 52, 54) in a distributed processing approach with the further computers then returning their task results to the co-ordinating computer for combination to form an overall scan result. Computer files containing embedded files may be divided into separate computer files that are scanned as

10   separate tasks. Furthermore, an individual computer file may be scanned for different properties by different computers as separate tasks. The selection of which tasks to distribute to which further computers may be made in dependence upon the complexity of the task to be delegated, the communication channel bandwidth to that further computer and the processing resources available at that further computer.

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[Figure 2]